

DUNKARD CREEK-6AugY2K13

----- Original Message -----

From: Frack Check WV

To: dcsoinks@comcast.net

Sent: Tuesday, August 06, 2013 3:01 AM

Subject: Public Meeting at Normantown, Gilmer County, WV

“What is the Scale of the Marcellus Shale ‘Play’?”

Update Report by S. Tom Bond, Retired Chemist and Resident Farmer, Lewis County, WV

On Thursday the 1st of August an informational meeting organized by residents of Gilmer County was held at Normantown, in Gilmer County. Gilmer County has been the target of a lot of Marcellus leasing activity in the recent months. Although Gilmer has been the location of much of the older type of oil and gas extraction, shale drilling with horizontal wells, slickwater fracking, and endless traffic is new to the area.

The introduction was made by Julie Archer of the Surface Owners Rights Organization, which has several members in the area. She explained the meeting was to help people know what is coming and to anticipate it. Knowing the law, monitoring the industrial activity, and staying in contact with the various state agencies is the way to protect the community. Citizens must be the eyes and ears of the agencies, because they are undermanned. Contamination, accidents, safety hazards on the road, environmental hazards, are all known to citizens almost as soon as or sooner, in some cases, than those who cause them. **Citizens act as “sensors” for the agencies.**

Three speakers presented talks about the kind of experience residents could expect. The first was Diane Pitcock, representing West Virginia Host Farms. Diane recognized very early that scientists and writers were being excluded from full coverage of shale drilling if the company had any reasonable expectation of anything but a glowing account of their exploitation of the resource. The way to give scientists and media access to drilling was for landowners to invite them to their properties where the drilling was going on.

Doddridge is the heart of the Marcellus industry in West Virginia at this time. Although the price of gas is still depressed, Doddridge is in the “wet” part of the Marcellus, producing heavier compounds closely related to methane, which can be extracted and sold separately at considerable advantage. Some of the wells make \$75, 000 a day. There are tremendous problems for residents, though. The drilling pads are huge, the roads they make to them are wide and pipelines require huge strips of forest. So there is a lot of property damage. Road traffic is intense, with people being crowded by the trucks, dust problems, sometimes long delays. There is evidence of connection between the new high pressure wells and older, often un- or poorly plugged wells.

Diane quoted Dr. Tony Infraffea's research showing that over 6% of the wells in Pennsylvania are faulty at the time they are drilled, and more can be expected to fail in time. She pointed out that the pad workers and truck drivers are doing hazardous work. The hours are long, especially for truck drivers, many are exposed to silicosis, various kinds of poisonous fumes, and being burned. They have no protection, because the usual OSHA protections are denied by exceptions to the law for oil and gas workers. Workers must keep their complaints about danger to themselves or lose their jobs.

The second speaker was Wayne Woods, president of the Doddridge County Watershed Association. This organization is a good example of what citizens in a drilled area can do to help the situation.

Wayne showed many pictures of damage to streams, property and wild life. The DCWA functions as a support group, gathering information, researching problems and keeping an eye on the neighborhood. One of the members monitors which streams the companies can take water out of, and reports this to others, who watch for violations, which can be reported to the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources (DNR). By being familiar with regulations, members can watch for things like brine dumping on roads, silt in streams, ponds contaminated, erosion measures not complete or not in required shape, and similar effects of careless construction. Things like stream diversion and a low water bridge (culvert system for a larger stream) which functions as a dam in high water or later after the tubes stopped up, also violates Army Corps of Engineers regulation. Very high on the list is detection of damage to water wells of members and neighbors, since Doddridge is so rural. No one wants to pay for "city water" for livestock and gardens.

The DCWA also monitors streams with conductivity meters and pH meters to detect any changes that might occur. They are very concerned with flood plain issues, having had a very bad incident of a company putting a drilling pad in a flood plain.

The third speaker was Bill Hughes of the Wetzel County Action Group. Wetzel County represents a county with a more developed Marcellus industry. It has over 300 wells now in production from just starting to well down the line to exhaustion. The web site for WCAG is located here. It has hundreds of pictures of the problems people living in Wetzel county have had to face, from massive slips to countless truck accidents to the notorious destruction of Blake Run Falls, one of the few natural falls in West Virginia and its shoddy reconstruction by Chesapeake upon order of the US EPA.

Bill showed a slide of how the county is divided up according to areas each company drills. He says Wetzel got it first because someone in Oklahoma City pointed to a map and that made a bull's eye of the county. He showed the production steps each driller must follow from deciding where to drill to production.

The second issue Bill discussed was the aggregation of air pollution from sites closely situated together. Each of these sites, wells, compressor stations, yards are the site industrial grade air pollution. When situated far apart the gases have a chance to disperse into the atmosphere. When they are close together, particularly under certain atmospheric conditions, such as an inversion of temperature in the atmosphere, or a still day, they tend to stay in place and the health problems become much worse, such things as asthma, nose bleed, dermatitis, and irritated mucosa. This aggregation of effect is not recognized by law at the present. Changing this should be one of our primary objectives, before full development occurs.

In conclusion, many people in Gilmer depend on the oil and gas industry for their income. About the only other sources of jobs in the county are service jobs and Glenville State and the Federal prison. They are having a hard time recognizing the effect of the scale of the Marcellus industry on what will happen to them. Some in the audience already work for Marcellus drillers. There was a good discussion after the meeting that lasted for most of an hour.

----- Original Message -----

From: Jeanne Williams

To: dcsoinks@comcast.net

Sent: Monday, August 05, 2013 1:58 PM

Subject: Carnegie Science Center - Medical Effects of Fracking - Mon. Aug 12 (7-9 PM)

----- Forwarded message -----

Subject: Carnegie Science Center - Medical Effects of Fracking - Mon. Aug 12 (7-9 PM)

From: Carnegie Science Center
<membership@carnegiemuseums.org>

Subject: Register Now for Cafe Scientifique!

Date: August 1, 2013 8:00:09 AM EDT

Reply-To: Carnegie Science Center
<membership@carnegiemuseums.org>

----- Original Message -----

From: Stan Scobie

To: cog@lists.earthworksaction.org

Sent: Monday, August 05, 2013 1:17 PM

Subject: [COG] Mexico's Leader Tackles Historic Oil Law

Stan Scobie, Binghamton, NY, 607-669-4683

" Economists say it would boost the competitiveness of Mexico's economy and likely reverse declining oil output, returning the country to the big leagues of global oil-exporting nations."

"Mexico is estimated to have the world's fourth biggest reserves of shale gas but imports gas from the U.S.—raising costs for its manufacturers."

Stan Scobie, Binghamton, NY, 607-669-4683===

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<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324635904578644363664634772.html>

Mexico's Leader Tackles Historic Oil Law
President Hopes to Boost Country's Image and Bring Billions in Investment; Move Would Loosen 75 Years of State Monopoly

• By JUAN MONTES

MEXICO CITY—President Enrique Peña Nieto is set to unveil a long-awaited proposal to change the constitution to try to lure back major private oil companies to Mexican oil fields for the first time since the country's 1938

nationalization, a move that could attract billions of dollars in investment and boost Mexico's image as an emerging economy.

The stakes are high for the new president, who took power last December for a six-year term. The proposal, expected to be delivered to the Senate on Wednesday, is seen as a make-or-break initiative. If passed, it could strengthen the leader's hand as he seeks to transform the country in other ways, such as overhauling a dysfunctional tax code and judicial system.

More broadly, it would showcase Mexico as a dynamic economic opportunity at a time when global growth is slow and other big emerging markets like Brazil have faded in appeal. Economists say it would boost the competitiveness of Mexico's economy and likely reverse declining oil output, returning the country to the big leagues of global oil-exporting nations.

"A transformational change in the energy market has the potential to finally place Mexico at the center of the stage among emerging markets," said Nomura Securities strategist Benito Berber in New York. "I would expect a double-digit growth in investment next year if the reform passes."

Mr. Peña Nieto's government wants to allow private firms to share the risks involved in developing increasingly complex energy reserves such as deep-water oil deposits by letting them produce oil and gas through profit-sharing deals and joint ventures with state monopoly Petróleos Mexicanos, or Pemex. Current service contracts have only attracted oil suppliers, such as Schlumberger or

Halliburton, which work on behalf of Pemex and can't drill on their own.

Chances for the legislation look good; besides the support from his ruling PRI party, the right-wing PAN opposition party within Mexico's divided Congress is also behind the reform.

But the leftist PRD party is likely to oppose the changes, and nationalist former presidential candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador is expected to try to lead street protests against the measure. If such protests gain momentum, they could pose trouble—a big reason why the government wants to push a vote through within weeks.

"The way the government explains the energy reform, and why it's necessary, is key for the success of the reform and will likely shape the presidency of Peña Nieto for the rest of his six-year term," said Alejandro Schtulmann, the head of political consultancy firm Empra.

Mexico's oil patch has been off-limits to the likes of Exxon Mobil and Royal Dutch Shell since former President Lázaro Cárdenas made history by becoming the first leader of a major oil-producing country to seize assets of foreign oil companies, turning him into a role model for nationalistic leaders in other oil-rich nations and a schoolbook hero for every Mexican child.

Rather than turn their back on the iconic Mr. Cárdenas, Mr. Peña Nieto and the party plan to argue that the former leader would agree with the proposed changes.

In a public presentation of the initiative, Mr. Peña Nieto is expected to make a strong defense of the public ownership of hydrocarbons and of Pemex, which was founded by Mr.

Cárdenas shortly after the expropriation. He will also pay homage to the expropriation as the right thing to do back then, but point out that Mr. Cárdenas never opposed the idea of joining efforts with the private sector to search for oil.

Mr. Peña Nieto's proposal will resemble the laws in force when Mr. Cárdenas left office in 1940. At that time, Mexico's Constitution was changed to ban concessions to private firms, but secondary laws explicitly welcomed private involvement in oil exploration and production through contracts, including sharing profits or production. It was only in 1960, at the time of the Cold War and the Cuban revolution, that Mexico decided to completely close off its energy industry, nationalizing the electric sector and explicitly banning all risk-sharing contracts.

"It is time to break with old-fashioned nationalist taboos that President Cárdenas, who we all admire, didn't even defend himself," said Manlio Fabio Beltrones, the PRI chief in the lower house. "Without losing the ownership of the hydrocarbons, we must find the way to find good partners and share profits with them."

Back in 1938, Mr. Cárdenas' strong-arm tactic made a lot of sense. Oil companies in the 1920 behaved a bit like playground bullies, sending the vast majority of their profits overseas. The final straw was when foreign oil companies flatly refused to comply with a court order for a pay hike for oil workers.

But decades later, things have changed. Since oil funds more than a third of Mexico's overall budget, decades of underinvestment have led to declining output and a lack of expertise. Mexico is estimated to have the world's fourth

biggest reserves of shale gas but imports gas from the U.S.—raising costs for its manufacturers.

Mexico was among the first countries to create a state oil monopoly, but would be one of the last to end it. Mexico has the world's most restrictive oil laws outside of Kuwait and North Korea. Nations like Brazil, Norway and Nigeria allow private companies to share in the risks and rewards of oil exploration.

The government's proposal is expected to amend Articles 25, 27 and 28 of the Constitution, the legal core of the country's oil nationalism. That's a similar approach of that of the former ruling PAN. Together, the PRI and the PAN have the two-thirds majority required in both houses of Congress to make constitutional changes.

The most nationalist groups inside the PRI, who have been resistant to deep changes in the past, appear to support the president this time around. "A majority inside the PRI backs an energy reform that doesn't privatize Pemex and the oil. In principle, I would say it has the support of all relevant sectors inside the party," said César Camacho, the president of the PRI.

Some PRI officials fear that the energy reform could spark a social outbreak in the country, mirroring the recent mass protests in Brazil.

Mr. López Obrador, the charismatic populist, has already called for a massive rally on Sep. 8 at Mexico City main square. It isn't clear yet if he will try to lead street protests, or take over the capital's main boulevard, Reforma, as he has done in the past.

"We will appeal to the Mexican people, who are the only ones that can stop this," said Martí Batres, a close adviser

to Mr. López Obrador. "As long as it is nonviolent, we don't rule out any action to defend the oil."
But protests will only have an impact if they are massive and manage to mobilize non-partisan middle-class sectors. "If López Obrador just gathers his own public, it will only be another demonstration, one of the hundreds Mexico City is used to," said Mr. Schtulmann.

Write to Juan Montes

at juan.montes@wsj.com=====

----- Original Message -----

From: Sharon Wilson

To: cog@lists.earthworksaction.org

Sent: Monday, August 05, 2013 12:02 PM

Subject: [COG] Even Forbes calls Range Resources a bully for gag order on children

When I speak to energy industry groups, I am most frequently asked variations on these two questions:

- 1) Why does the oil industry have such a bad reputation with the public and
- 2) What can be done about it?

One answer is that the industry needs to stop acting like it has something to hide. On the debate over hydraulic fracturing, in particular, the industry ceded its chance to lead the public discourse because it retreated to its usual posture of denial and opacity rather than transparency. In recent years, some companies have tried to change that, but the seeds of doubt have already been sown in the public's mind.

And then, companies do things like this. Mother Jones reports that landowners in Pennsylvania recently settled a dispute with Range Resources RRC +0.36% for \$750,000 that related to alleged health and environmental damages from fracking on their land. As part of the deal,

Range's attorneys required the company agree to a gag order that prevents the family from commenting "in any fashion whatsoever" on fracking activities.

But that's not all. [A transcript](#) from a court hearing in 2011 shows Range's attorneys insisted that the gag order extends to the landowners' children, ages 7 and 10. Presumably, the order would no longer apply once the children reach adulthood, but it's not clear. Range's lawyer told Mother Jones that the terms of the settlement apply to the whole family and "we would certainly enforce it." Range itself has a different view:

A Range Resources spokesperson, however, [told the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette this week](#) that they don't actually think that:

Matt Pitzarella, a Range Resources spokesman, said Wednesday that the comments by Mr. Swetz are "not something we agree with" and added "we don't believe the . . . settlement applies to children." He also said that Range has entered into no other nondisclosure agreements that bar children from speaking.

Does it really matter? The company allowed its lawyer to press for the settlement terms and to threaten enforcement. What's more, reporters were barred from the original hearing and the Pittsburgh paper had to go to court to get the records unsealed. Range, in other words, is looking like a company that has something to hide. In fact, it seems so afraid of what might be revealed about its practices that it is trying to silence the mouths of babes.

Now that the story is getting national attention, the company's best response is that it doesn't agree with its own lawyers.

It's not clear from the story what the family's health claims were or whether a link to fracking was proved. But that issue once again gets overshadowed by an oil companies' bully tactics.

Fracking has the potential to change the energy and economic future of the country, unleashing an abundant supply of natural gas that's better for the environment than coal and oil. Yet the industry has failed at every turn to get this message to the general public.

This sort of behavior is exactly why the public doesn't trust the energy industry. What can it do about it? Well, for starters, it could stop getting gag orders against children.

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----- Original Message -----

From: [dave saville](#)

To: 'Donald C. Strimbeck'

Sent: Monday, August 05, 2013 6:05 AM

Subject: FW: WVNS story: Restoring West Virginia's "Magnificent" Spruce Forests

Restoring West Virginia's "Magnificent" Spruce Forests

Dan Heyman, Public News Service-WV

<http://www.publicnewsservice.org/index.php?/content/article/33646-1>

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[@pns_news](#) [@pns_WV](#) Google+: plus.to/publicnewsservice

(08/05/13) CHARLESTON, W.Va. - Government agencies, nonprofits, businesses and individuals are all working to bring back West Virginia's "magnificent" spruce forests. Evan Burks coordinates the [Central Appalachian Spruce Restoration Initiative](#) for the Monongahela National Forest. Burks said the spruce forests are high-elevation remnants of the last ice age, almost lost in the logging that stripped much of the state in the early 20th century.

Restoring them is important, in part, because they create a cool-climate refuge for hundreds of rare species, Burks explained.

"The ground will be covered in moss and rocks," he said, "and it'll be cool and moist. If it's a hot summer day and you walk into that beautiful big spruce forest, it's going to feel like walking into an air-conditioned room."

Volunteers harvest seeds from the native trees' pine cones to have them grown into seedlings, he said, adding that they have planted hundreds of thousands of the seedlings across thousands of acres since 2007.

Burks said the spruce makes beautiful, high quality wood that is especially strong for its weight - part of the reason so much of it was cut a century ago. The Wright brothers used

West Virginia red spruce, and instrument makers still value it, he added. Private timber companies help with the restoration, he said, noting that Plum Creek Timber worked with his group to plant spruce around other trees infected with the deadly woolly adelgid.

"They wanted to come in and underplant these dying hemlock trees with red spruce," he said, "so that when the hemlocks eventually do die, a tree will be there to grow up in its place."

Burks said researchers have found the forests take large amounts of carbon from the atmosphere and sequester it in the forest floor, which means the trees are great for cleaning the air and water. That means a lot for brook trout and native fly-fishing, as well as for millions of people downstream near the Ohio and Potomac rivers, he added.

"These forests and these headwater streams are basically the lungs of the east coast. Restoring and protecting the red spruce forests along these mountain streams is really important," he said.

Eventually, they would like to connect West Virginia's spruce forests with those being restored in North Carolina, Tennessee and southern Virginia, he concluded.

More information is available at www.RestoreRedSpruce.org.

dcsoinks@comcast.net

----- Original Message -----

From: Duane Nichols

To: Donald C. Strimbeck

Sent: Monday, August 05, 2013 2:40 PM

Subject: The Book that Helps You Fight Fracking

Subject: The Book that Helps You Fight Fracking

Hi Frack Fighter!

I'm reaching out to let you know that we've just released "SNAKE OIL: How Fracking's False Promise of Plenty Imperils Our Future" by Senior Fellow Richard Heinberg. I've included the press release below to give you an overview, but to be succinct: This is the book that summarizes frack industry lies, tears them apart piece by piece, and provides concerned citizens, activists and electeds with the specific language and logic that to expose these lies clearly to interested public and media.

Here's the book: <http://bit.ly/FrackFighters> (yes, it's an Amazon link ... we've gone print on demand to reduce waste to near zero, printed in the USA. Our POD company was recently purchased by Amazon. Ack.)

If you'd like a free copy sent to your organization, just let me know. If you find it as valuable as we believe you will, we'll figure out a way to offer a steep institutional discount if you'd like to distribute copies.

Of course, getting the word out on this book is key to us. If you can fire off a social media blurb, tell your followers, et cetera, that will be deeply appreciated. Lastly, we hope you're familiar with our reports that will also be of huge value to you: <http://www.shale-bubble.org>

Keep fighting,

Post Carbon Institute

----- For Release: 30 July 2013

Energy Expert Richard Heinberg Frees America from Fracking's False Promises

Santa Rosa, CA (30. July) Richard Heinberg & the Post Carbon Institute announce the release of SNAKE OIL: How Fracking's False Promise of Plenty Imperils Our Future, a new book that dispels the hype around shale gas and oil that has hijacked America's energy conversation. SNAKE OIL also casts a critical eye on the environmental impacts and the purported economic benefits of new oil and gas production technologies.

Building on the most exhaustively researched analysis of shale production to date, Heinberg categorically refutes:

- Industry claims of a long-term economic bonanza and energy security as a result of domestic drilling for shale gas and shale (tight) oil.
- The perception that shale gas and tight oil drilling will provide long term, low cost supplies.
- The purported benefits to local economies: Heinberg shows that states with active fracking operations are spending more on road maintenance than they take in via severance taxes.
- The case for authorizing shale gas exports: given constraints on future domestic production, the only thing exports can accomplish is to raise natural gas prices for American consumers.
- Claims of major benefits of fracking for the nation: fewer jobs have been created than the industry claims, and temporarily increased domestic oil and gas production have led to a side-tracking of sound climate and energy policy.

In SNAKE OIL, Heinberg highlights data and research that show, with absolute clarity, that rather than offering the nation a century of cheap energy and economic prosperity, fracking may well present us with a short-term bubble that comes with exceeding high economic and environmental costs. With the facts now presented in plain light, American citizens and policymakers can work together on smart energy policy based on hard truths rather than fuzzy industry hype.

"Snake Oil exposes the unsustainable economics behind the so-called fracking boom, giving the lie to industry claims that natural gas will bring great economic benefits and long-term energy security to the United States. In clear, hard-hitting language, Heinberg reveals that communities where fracking has taken place are actually being hurt economically. For those who want to know the truth about why natural gas is a gangplank, not a bridge, Snake Oil is a must-read."

COMMON DREAMS:

Published on Monday, August 5, 2013 by [DeSmog Blog](#)

Revealed: EPA Fracking Study Rebukes Agency's Own Safety Claims

DeSmog Exclusive: Censored EPA PA fracking water contamination presentation published for first time

by Steve Horn

DeSmogBlog has obtained a copy of an Obama Administration Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) fracking groundwater contamination PowerPoint presentation describing a then-forthcoming study's findings in Dimock, Pennsylvania.

The PowerPoint presentation reveals a clear link between hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") for shale gas in Dimock and groundwater contamination, but was censored by the Obama Administration. Instead, the EPA issued an official desk statement in July 2012 - in the thick of election year - saying the water in Dimock was safe for consumption.

Titled "Isotech-Stable Isotype Analysis: Determinining the Origin of Methane and Its Effets on the Aquifer," the PowerPoint presentation concludes that in Cabot Oil and Gas' Dimock Gesford 2 well, "Drilling creates pathways, either temporary or permanent, that allows gas to migrate to the shallow aquifer near [the] surface...In some cases, these gases disrupt groundwater quality."

Other charts depict Cabot's Gesford 3 and 9 wells as doing much of the same, allowing methane to migrate up to aquifers to unprecedented levels - not coincidentally - coinciding with the wells being fracked. The PowerPoint's conclusions are damning.

"Methane is released during the drilling and perhaps during the fracking process and other gas well work," the presentation states. "Methane is at significantly higher concentrations in the aquifers after gas drilling and perhaps as a result of fracking and other gas well work...Methane and other gases released during drilling (including air from the drilling) apparently cause significant damage to the water quality."

Despite the findings, the official EPA desk statement concluded any groundwater contamination in Dimock was "naturally occurring."

"EPA found hazardous substances, specifically arsenic, barium or manganese, all of which are also naturally occurring substances, in well water at five homes at levels that could present a health concern," read the EPA desk statement. "EPA has provided the residents with all of their sampling results and has no further plans to conduct additional drinking water sampling in Dimock."

Two EPA whistleblowers recently approached the American Tradition Institute and revealed politics were at-play in the decision to censor the EPA's actual findings in Dimock. At the heart of the cover-up was former EPA head Lisa Jackson.

Former EPA Head Lisa Jackson's Role in Censoring Report

EnergyWire's Mike Soraghan explained the studies were dropped - according to one of the unidentified whistleblowers close to the field team in Dimock - "out of fear the inquiries would hurt President Obama's re-election chances."

Though the two EPA career employees' initial findings pointed to water contamination in Dimock - as seen in the PowerPoint presentation - their superiors told them to stop the investigation, in turn motivating them to blow the whistle.

One of the whistleblowers said he came forward due to witnessing "patently unethical and possibility illegal acts conducted by EPA management."

"I have for over a year now worked within the system to try and make right the injustice and apparent unethical acts I witnessed. I have not been alone in this effort," the unnamed whistleblower told Soraghan. "I took an oath when I became a federal employee that I assume very solemnly."

At the center of the management team overseeing the false desk statement: former EPA head Lisa Jackson, who now works as Apple's top environmental advisor. Jackson was recently replaced by just-confirmed EPA head Gina McCarthy.

This was revealed by the other whistleblower, who as part of the regular duties of his job, was a member of the "HQ-Dimock" email listserv. On that list, Jackson went by the pseudonym "Richard Windsor" as a way to shield her real name from potential Freedom of Information Act requests.

"Many members of the email group...were lawyers and members of Lisa Jackson's inner political circle," explained Soraghan.

Key Freedom of Information Act Filed

American Tradition Institute has filed two FOIA's in response to the whistleblowers coming forward.

"One FOIA request seeks certain e-mails, text messages, or instant messages of three specified EPA field staff which are to, from or make reference to the White House or EPA HQ," explained ATI. "The second FOIA request focuses on emails sent as part of the 'HQ-Dimock' discussion group. Both requests cover the seven-month period from December 1, 2011 through June 30, 2012."

Natural Resources Defense Council - which has also been critical of the EPA on this issue - is suspicious of ATI's motives in this case.

ATI is more well-known for denying climate change's existence and "ClimateGate" in particular. Yet, when push comes to shove, NRDC's Kate Sinding approves of ATI's FOIA filing and looks forward to what it discovers.

"It appears to be an attempt to bully EPA out of these cases," Sinding told EnergyWire. "If their request results in getting more information about the decisionmaking, that's good information for everyone. But I question their motivation."

"Hide It, Drop It, Forget About It"

The real question at the heart of the matter: What were the EPA's motives for doing an about-face on a key multi-year tax-payer subsidized study?

"It is unconscionable that, in the name of political expediency, the Obama Administration suppressed key information that would have connected the dots between fracking and water contamination," Wenonah Hauter, Executive Director of Food and Water Watch told *DeSmogBlog*. "Gina McCarthy must put the health and safety of Americans first and prevent the agency from succumbing to political pressure."

Scott Ely - a former Cabot employee and Dimock resident who has three small children and whose water was contaminated by Cabot - expressed similar despair over EPA abandoning ship in this high-profile study.

"When does anybody just stand by the truth? Why is it that we have a bunch of people in Washington, DC who are trying to manipulate the truth of what's happening to people in Dimock because of the industry?," Ely asked rhetorically.

Ely says he keeps an open line of communications with EPA employees, who regularly check in and caution him not to use his water. The employees remain unidentified for fear of retribution by EPA upper-level management.

"We thought EPA was going to come in and be our savior. And what'd they do? They said the truth can't be known: hide it, drop it, forget about it."

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Published on *Alternet* (<http://www.alternet.org>)

Think Progress / By *Andrew Breiner*

Drilling Company Bans Young Children From Talking About Fracking, Forever

August 5, 2013 |

When drilling company Range Resources offered the Hallowich family a \$750,000 settlement to relocate from their fracking-polluted home in Washington County, Pennsylvania, it came with a common restriction. Chris and Stephanie Hallowich would be forbidden from ever speaking about fracking or the Marcellus Shale. But one element of the gag order was all new. The Hallowichs' two young children, ages 7 and 10, would be subject to the same restrictions, banned from speaking about their family's experience for the rest of their lives.

The Hallowich family's gag order is only the most extreme example of a tactic that critics say effectively silences anyone hurt by fracking. It's a choice between receiving compensation for damage done to one's health and property, or publicizing the abuses that caused the harm. Virtually no one can forgo compensation, so their stories go untold.

Bruce Baizel, Energy Program Director at Earthworks, an environmental group focusing on mineral and energy development, said in a phone interview that the companies' motives are clear. "The refrain in the industry is, this is a safe process. There's no record of contamination. That whole claim would be undermined if these things were public." There have been attempts to measure the number of settlements with non-disclosure agreements, Baizel said, but to no avail. "They don't have to be registered, they don't have to be filed. It's kind of a black hole."

The Hallowich case shows how drilling companies can use victims' silence to rewrite their story. The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette reported [2] that before their settlement, the Hallowichs complained that drilling caused "burning eyes, sore throats, headaches and

earaches, and contaminated their water supply.” But after the family was gagged, gas exploration company Range Resources’ spokesman Matt Pitzarella insisted “they never produced evidence of any health impacts,” and that the family wanted to move because “they had an unusual amount of activity around them.” Public records will show, once again, that fracking did not cause health problems.

It’s not the only time gas exploration companies have gone to great lengths to keep the health problems caused by fracking under wraps. A 2012 Pennsylvania law [3] requires companies to tell doctors the chemical contents of fracking fluids, so long as doctors don’t reveal that information, even to patients they are treating for fracking-related illness.

Sharon Wilson, an organizer with Earthworks, said that was the point. “These gag orders are the reason [drillers] can give testimony to Congress and say there are no documented cases of contamination. And then elected officials can repeat that.” She makes it clear she doesn’t blame the families who take the settlements. “They do what they have to do to protect themselves and their children.”

Wilson witnessed the very beginning of fracking in her own backyard. Some of the first experiments in combining horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing took place around her 42 acres of land in Wise County, Texas, on the Barnett Shale, and everyone was cashing in. But she saw the negatives first-hand. “I thought they were digging a stock pond, but it was actually a waste pit,” she said on the phone. “I caught them illegally dumping in streams and creeks.”

That led Wilson to start the work she continues to this day with Earthworks – helping landowners prove damage to their health and property from fracking, for eventual settlement. But as soon as the settlement comes, she said, “they get gagged. And then they can never talk about it again.” Wilson knew the Hallowichs, but now rarely talks to them, afraid she could cause them to run afoul of the gag order.

But even she was shocked that the Hallowich children would be gagged too. “How can you even do that?” she asked. “Is there a list of words the kids aren’t allowed to say?” Peter Vallari, the Hallowichs’ lawyer, said that in decades of legal work, he had never seen such a thing, and could find no example of a similar gag order. “It’s not typical, and it was imposed on my clients, put in the way of an ultimatum,” he said by phone.

Wary of the bad press for putting a lifetime gag order on two minors, Pizzarella told the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette [2] that “we don’t believe the [Hallowich] settlement applies to children.” This, despite ready availability of the settlement transcript [5], in which the company’s lawyer states “I guess our position is it does apply to the whole family. We would certainly enforce it.”

Vallari, the Hallowichs' attorney, doesn't buy Pizzarella's retraction via press. "Their lawyers insisted on that language, and they said they wanted it enforced," he said when reached by phone. "Until they write me a letter or sign a stipulation saying [it doesn't apply to the children], I don't believe it." Pizzarella did not respond to requests for interview.

Wilson, the organizer, said that even beyond making political action more difficult, gag orders are causing people direct harm. "When you get a settlement and get gagged, you can't warn your neighbors," she said. "Then your neighbors drink the very same water, and have health issues that are probably permanent."

Source URL: <http://www.alternet.org/drilling-company-bans-young-children-talking-about-fracking-forever>

Optimism on Shell Beaver plant qualified

About Timothy Puko

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By Timothy Puko

PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

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Horsehead Holding Corp. officials downplayed optimistic comments the company's leader made on Monday about whether global oil giant Shell will build a petrochemical plant in Beaver County.

The chemical arm of Royal Dutch Shell plc holds an option to buy Horsehead's zinc smelter site that spans Potter and Center along the Ohio River. It may build a "cracker" there to help turn Marcellus shale ethane into plastics. State leaders have courted Shell, offering it a tax-free zone in hopes the multibillion-dollar project would hire up to 10,000 workers during construction and lead to a new chemical industry here.

"We think that's a very likely outcome, that they will exercise that option," Horsehead CEO Jim Hensler said when an analyst in a quarterly earnings call asked about the future of the land. "We haven't put a lot of focus or attention on (other options) right now because we don't want to commit any resources until we understand for sure what Shell's going to be doing."

Hensler's comments were "probably an overstatement," company spokesman Ali Alavi said later Monday afternoon. Shell workers are actively assessing the site and communicating with local and state leaders, Alavi and other officials said recently. That's been viewed as an optimistic sign, but Shell officials haven't told Hensler of any decision or expectation, Alavi said when asked to clarify.

"I watch what they're doing, and I think that's pretty positive," he added. "But if someone can spend millions of dollars on due diligence and then say, 'No, that's not for us,' it's Shell."

The huge stakes behind the Shell project have led to widespread speculation and news reports about the slightest comments from people involved. Shell officials have said little, except that their process for making a final decision is lengthy and ongoing.

The company announced a 60 percent drop in second-quarter profits on Thursday, including a \$2 billion writeoff in the value of its North American shale properties. It plans to sell some of its oil and gas holdings on the continent, but nothing local, company spokeswoman Kimberly Windon said on Monday.

"We have a large investment in the Appalachian Basin and believe we are well-positioned for the future with both liquids rich and dry gas opportunities in the region," she said in an emailed statement.

Shale gas in Western Pennsylvania is valuable because it's close to consumer markets and rich in liquid gases such as ethane, propane and butane. Ethane and propane can be separated from the supply of dry gas — methane — and used to make plastics and other products, which is what pushed Shell to consider building the region's first cracker.

Shell and Crafton-based Horsehead have never announced the terms of their deal, except that environmental cleanup at the site would be Shell's responsibility, Horsehead's Hensler told analysts. The smelter is likely to keep operating there until year's end, when Horsehead expects to open a plant in North Carolina, he said.

Horsehead lost \$828,000 from April through June, or 2 cents per share, compared to losses of nearly \$1.7 million, or 4 cents per share, during the same period a year ago, it reported on Monday. Revenue fell to \$110.5 million from \$117.5 million. The company is suffering with low commodity prices and will be better able to compete profitably once it moves operations to North Carolina, company officials said.

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Breaking News

DEP nixing gas wastewater plant

Monday, August 5, 2013

CREEKSIDE (AP) – State regulators are shutting down a Texas firm's plans to build a drilling wastewater treatment facility at the site of a Western Pennsylvania rodeo arena.

Officials with Aquatic Synthesis Unlimited and its partner company, Terra Services, of Irving, Texas, didn't immediately return calls for comment on the actions being taken by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection.

A DEP spokesman tells the Indiana Gazette the agency begun forcing the companies to close and clean up the facility begun two years ago in Rayne Township. That's about 50 miles northeast of Pittsburgh.

The companies wanted to treat wastewater from natural gas and oil drilling, but the DEP says the facility has been idle since September and that about 1 million gallons of water remains at the site.

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READER SUPPORTED NEWS

Study: Climate Change Pushing Marine Life Towards the Poles

By Helen Davidson, Guardian UK

05 July 13

Marine species, more than land-based species, are altering their breeding, feeding and migration patterns.

Rising ocean temperatures are rearranging the biological make-up of our oceans, pushing species towards the poles by 7kms every year, as they chase the climates they can survive in, according to new research.

The study, conducted by a working group of scientists from 17 different institutions, gathered data from seven different countries and found the warming oceans are causing marine species to alter their breeding, feeding and migration patterns.

Surprisingly, land species are shifting at a rate of less than 1km a year in comparison, even though land surface temperatures are rising at a much faster rate than those in the ocean.

"In general, the air is warming faster than the ocean because the air has greater capacity to absorb temperature. So we expected to see more rapid response on land than in the ocean. But we sort of found the inverse," said study researcher Dr Christopher Brown, post-doctoral research fellow at the University of Queensland's Global Change Institute.

Brown said this may be because marine animals are able to move vast distances, or it could be because it's easier to escape changing temperatures on land where there are hills and valleys, rather than on a flat ocean surface.

The team looked at a wide variety of species, from plankton and ocean plants to predators such as seals, seabirds and big fish.

"One of the unique things about this study is that we've looked at everything," said Brown.

"We covered every link in the food chain and we found there were changes in marine life that were consistent with climate change across all the world's oceans and across all those different links in the food chain."

The warming oceans are shortening winter and bringing on spring and all the events that come with it - like breeding events and plankton blooms - earlier than normal.

For the species that can't keep moving towards the colder waters, this could have dire consequences.

"Some species like barnacles and lots of shellfish are constrained to living on the coast, so in places like Tasmania, if they're already at the edge of the range there's nowhere for them to go. You could potentially lose those," said Brown.

The scientists found that 81% of the study's observations supported the hypothesis that climate change was behind the changes seen.

To combat this, Brown said people have to think about changing activities to adapt.

"For example, fisheries might need to move their ports to keep track of the species they prefer to catch," he said.

"The obvious one is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions which will slow or reduce the rate of warming in the oceans, but there's a long lag time in that. Even if we reduce emissions now then those effects won't be seen for 20 years or so."